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Chairman: Mr. Al-Shami (Vice-President) ..... (Yemen)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 28: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/65/336)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/65/38, A/65/208, A/65/209, A/65/218, A/65/268, A/65/334 and A/65/354-S/2010/466)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/65/204 and A/C.3/65/L.7)

1. **Mr. Momen** (Bangladesh) stated that the Government of Bangladesh considered it a point of honour to promote the empowerment of women. In the course of her two terms of office, the Prime Minister, Ms. Sheikh Hasina, had launched the first national policy for the advancement of women and an Action Plan incorporating the goals of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and recently she had adopted further measures to advance gender equality. Since poverty eradication and the empowerment of women were inseparable, those twin objectives had been taken into account in planning development policies. Furthermore, gender issues had been taken into account in a good many public policies.

2. As a result of the country having invested heavily in the education of women, parity had been reached in the ratio of girls to boy in primary and secondary education, as prescribed in the third Millennium Development Goal. At the same time, the Government was striving to eradicate poverty, particularly among women, by implementing a whole series of social programs, offering vocational training courses and lending support to small and medium-sized enterprises.

3. Economic emancipation of women had made their political emancipation possible: thus, women were not only well represented in all professions; they also headed major ministries and comprised approximately 19% of parliamentarians.

4. The year 2010 marked the tenth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), to which Bangladesh attached considerable importance, because peacekeeping operations could contribute significantly to women's security and well-being during and after conflicts. The speaker noted that gender issues had been taken into account for United Nations peacekeeping operations and that a Bangladesh police unit comprised entirely of women had been deployed in June 2010 to the Mission in Haiti.

5. The Government was also combating the transnational crime of trafficking in women and children. It had also adopted a number of measures to ensure treatment for women suffering from obstetric fistula and their reintegration in society.

6. The speaker recalled that Bangladesh had discharged its international duty by submitting its report, in January 2010, to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Finally, the speaker said he deplored the insufficient funding for UN Women and reminded those present that the countries concerned could do very little without more robust international cooperation, the mobilization of resources and global partnerships. The developed countries therefore had to honour the commitments they had entered into regarding Official Development Assistance, which were set forth in the Brussels Programme of Action. It was the resources that they provided that would finance activities related to the empowerment of women and have a major, beneficial social and economic impact.

7. **Mr. Mnisi** (Swaziland) maintained that it was impossible to ensure sustainable development and social justice without granting women the right to participate on an equal footing with men in political, social and economic life. His Government had therefore committed itself to implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, with a view to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. It was also striving to protect women's human rights. The speaker recalled in that regard that the Constitution of Swaziland prohibited discrimination and proclaimed the rights and freedoms of women. The country was also Party to the principal human rights instruments promoting gender equality and respect for women's rights. At the same time, the Council of Ministers had adopted a national policy in favour of gender equality, which aimed, on the one hand, to implement, at the local, regional and national levels, development projects that took gender considerations into account and, on the other, to establish a legal framework according ample importance to this matter by allocating sufficient resources. In addition, Swaziland was participating in African Women's Decade activities.

8. The Government had committed itself to improving the health of women and girls and to that end had adopted a wide range of measures, above all on issues relating to maternal and child health, reproductive health and sexuality, as well to the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases. Despite all that progress and cooperation from entities such as UNFPA, the country continued to grapple with poverty and HIV/AIDS. Women bore a triple burden: as persons living with HIV, as mothers of infected children, and as persons looking after sick spouses, parents, or orphans. Swaziland lacked the resources needed to help them and appealed for stronger cooperation with development partners, because the economic and energy crises, as well as food insecurity and climate change threatened to undermined the progress made. At the same time, the country condemned violence against women and was currently embarking on laws to address the issue. The country also acknowledged that trafficking in human beings constituted a serious problem that called for a response from the international community. In that connection, the speaker welcomed the United Nations Global Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons, which would make it possible to expedite efforts to prosecute the perpetrators and protect the victims of that trafficking. He hoped that a special fund earmarked for that purpose would soon materialize and reminded those present that Swaziland had also played a part in the adoption of the Southern African Development Community's Strategic Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

9. **Mr. Şen** (Turkey) noted that significant progress had been made in the world with respect to the advancement of women, protection of their rights and gender equality. Thanks to the laws passed against sexist discrimination, women were gradually taking their rightful place in the social, economic and political spheres in their countries. Nonetheless, it remained true that, 10 years after Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), and despite progress made regarding the protection and promotion of women's rights in conflict situations, much implementation work still needed to be done and more effective measures were needed to protect and emancipate women.

10. Turkey had embarked on reforms over the past 10 years in favour of gender equality, a principle that the country had written into its Constitution. Turkey had also recognized the primacy of international agreements over its domestic legislation. As a Party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, in 2010 Turkey had presented its sixth periodic report on the subject. The Constitutional reform adopted in 2010 following a referendum had had the effect of bolstering human rights and fundamental freedoms and, in particular, of instituting "positive" discrimination, which, in that context, did not contravene the principle of equality. Turkey was thus in a better position to discharge its obligations under human rights conventions. The country had also striven to render gender equality effective and had established a parliamentary commission responsible for overseeing implementation of measures adopted to that end. It had enacted several Action Plans geared especially to ensuring gender equality, notably with respect to access to education and employment and to combating violence against women. At the same time, numerous projects and campaigns on topics related to women had been launched to sensitize public opinion. Turkey had also hosted several conferences on women's issues in order to sensitize international opinion and invited all interested parties to an international meeting on women to be held in Istanbul on November 5 and 6, 2010.

11. **Mr. Herczyński** (Poland) stressed that gender equality was essential for the well-being of the family, the consolidation of democracy, social justice and cohesion and sustainable economic growth. He remarked that the Polish Government was endeavouring to promote the advancement of women by adopting equal opportunity measures with respect to employment and sensitizing society. He said that gender equality measures should be regarded as long-term investments, not as a short-term expense. Finally, while supporting the European Union Declaration on Gender Equality, the speaker reminded those present that Poland by no means read into reproductive and sexual health rights any encouragement at all of the promotion of abortion.

12. **Ms. Štiglic** (Slovenia) said she wanted UN Women to strengthen in practice the principles of gender equality and empowerment of women in the world. While underscoring the work of the Secretary-General to promote the elimination of discrimination against women, the speaker asserted that much remained to be done in that area, in law and in practice. She was very pleased that the Human Rights Council had established a working group charged with

examining this issue and encouraged all States to cooperate with it. She declared that gender equality and the empowerment of women were essential for promoting development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Recalling the 10th anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which recognized the part played by women in peace, security and prosperity, the speaker deplored the fact that women continued to be victims of violence, especially acts of sexual violence, during and after armed conflicts, and called for the adoption of new measures aimed at implementing all the provision of the resolution. She proposed establishing, at the international level, indicators for tracking compliance with the resolution and for relentlessly combating the impunity of the perpetrators of those crimes. She said that, domestically, Slovenia would shortly adopt a National Plan for implementing the resolution. In conclusion, she emphasized that 2010 had been an exceptional year in the sense that numerous mechanisms for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women had been put in place and she trusted that that positive momentum would translate into concrete measures.

13. **Mr. Giorgio** (Eritrea) pointed out that in 2009 his country had commemorated the 30th anniversary of the National Union of Eritrean Women, which had been established during the struggle for independence in order to achieve gender equality. Later, the Government had charged it with promoting the empowerment of women. Public debates had been organized in different parts of the country to take stock of those 30 years of efforts and to establish the political, social and economic measures that needed to be adopted now to take the process further. Those discussions had revealed that women's rights and the need to empower women were more widely known. While their status in economic and social spheres, and in the political arena, had improved considerably, compared to that of their parents, it remained true that the burdens that women and girls continued to bear in their families and their communities hampered the development of their full potential.

14. For that reason, it had been stressed that improving legislation would not suffice. Rather, what was needed was concerted action to correct the underlying causes of disparities between the sexes. Apart from improved coordination and more robust political will, a particularly promising approach appeared to be the replication on a larger scale of projects which, albeit modest, had been tried and tested on the ground. Thus a project implemented in rural areas, called the "Donkey and Canvas [Water Container] Project," had made it possible to involve boys in tasks traditionally allotted to girls, such as fetching water, thereby freeing girls to attend schools. Microcredit programs had also been tried and found to be useful. More generally, the participation of women at all stages of development projects, from planning to implementation, guaranteed better results.

15. Eritrea was determined to implement to the full its national gender equality policy, which had been aligned with the Millennium Development Goals and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. However, for that it needed additional support for capacity-building at every level.

16. Finally, the speaker stressed that Eritrea was set on eliminating obstetric fistula by 2011, by making free health care universal. It had also stepped up its efforts to put an end to female genital mutilation.

17. **Mr. Tobgay** (Bhutan) said that his country's commitment to gender equality had been written into its policies and laws, including two articles of the Constitution, and that bills strengthening women's rights and the institutions responsible for protecting them were about to be adopted by Parliament. For the first time, Bhutan had also made the gender issue a whole section of its five-year plan, which from then on would contain data broken done by gender. It had also adopted a national Action Plan devoted to that issue, covering seven priority areas, including training, employment, stereotypes and gender-based violence, and relying for implementation on a network of coordination mechanisms.

18. Bhutan was proud of the fact that its traditional society provided a safe environment for women in much of the country, families were matrilineal, and women inherited property, which endowed them with real decision-making power. As shown in its seventh periodic report on the matter in 2009, Bhutan is, despite its limited capacities, striving gradually to reach full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, particularly by strengthening its institutional resources and allocating additional funding to its legislative and executive branches of government.

19. The results of many years of promotion of women's rights were now evident, particularly in the fact that Bhutan had achieved parity in the enrolment of boys and girls in primary school: one of the Millennium Development Goals. The country intended to continue fighting all forms of inequality between men and women.

20. **Mr. Jomaa** (Tunisia) explained that his country had always been convinced that neither democracy nor development could come about without women's participation and that strengthening women' rights was the best way to immunize the family and society against numerous evils. Since 1956, the Code of Personal Status had emancipated women, abolished polygamy, and made divorce subject to judicial procedures. Later, the system of rights and acquired benefits had been considerably enriched, particularly following the adoption in 1993 of a series of legislative reforms aimed at stripping the principal legal instruments, including the Labour Code and the Criminal Code, of all forms of sexist discrimination. The Tunisian Constitution and laws proclaimed the equal status of women and their partnership with men in family matters and in society, and so it was in practice.

21. The speaker said that the six-year-old girl school enrolment rate was currently 99 % and that 58 % of secondary school pupils and 60 % of students in higher education were female. Women deputies accounted for 27.5 % of the Chamber and 33% of municipal councillors were women. Women were also well represented in the magistrature and journalism. Furthermore, a law had been promulgated allowing the option of a communal estate of husband and wife, in the interests of the family, and a research, documentation and information centre on women had been charged with monitoring and promoting the advancement of women, especially application of the strategy for combating all forms of violence against women.

22. Tunisia's presidency of the Arab Women Organization, held by the country's First Lady, Mrs. Leïla Ben Ali, had particularly helped sensitize public opinion, the media and the governments of Arab countries to the importance of promoting the status of women. A joint strategy to combat sexist violence had also been adopted along with another social policy, namely the institution of an Arab Day of the Elderly.

23. Given that equality and partnership between men and women were essential for societies to progress, promoting the status of women should be regarded as a universal cause that called for much greater interest, support and solidarity on the part of the entire international community.

24. **Mr. Venugopal** (India) said that, shortly after independence, the founding fathers of his country had taken care to write into the Constitution the principles of gender equality and the empowerment of women, including, where necessary, "positive" discrimination. In 2001, India had also embraced a national policy on the subject and it had mainstreamed gender issues in its 2007-2012 five-year plan and in all its development plans.

25. Several of the numerous projects under way concerned education, economic and social empowerment, and health. The Education for All campaign targeted in particular girls living in remote areas, by offering them incentives, such as boarding facilities and free lunches. Thanks to the 2.2 million self-help groups formed under the Swayamsidha programme, which covers 33 million households, small and medium-sized industrial, craft, and agricultural enterprises had been established. Since the launching of the National Rural Health Mission in 2005, health outlays had exceeded US$3.5 billion a year, where priority had been given to maternal and child health programmes, particularly in order to reduce maternal mortality and that of new-born children. Efforts had focused on the 235 districts accounting for 70 % of maternal-child mortality cases. There, much had been achieved thanks, in particular, to the work of a network of voluntary health workers in rural areas paid according to the results they achieved.

26. Political empowerment was the most important component in women's overall empowerment. The Constitution had been amended to earmark 33% of the seats in local bodies to women, and currently over a million women were represented in such bodies. In 2009, Parliament raised that quota to 50 %. Moreover, a bill that had already passed the upper chamber of Parliament and was due to be considered by the lower house, envisaged reserving for women one third of the seats in the Federal Parliament and in state legislative assemblies.

27. India, which regarded gender equality and the empowerment of women as top priorities, welcomed three major achievement of the United Nations in 2010: the establishment of UN Women, the launching

of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, and the launching of the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health. India hoped that the Executive Board of UN Women would soon be installed and promptly engage in effective actions meeting the expectations of the Member States.

28. **Mr. García González** (El Salvador) welcomed the establishment of UN Women and the appointment of Ms. Bachelet to head it, given her well-known leadership skills and commitment to development and the advancement of women. He reaffirmed that the start-up of the new entity and the constitution of its Executive Board should be regarded as an opportunity to consolidate the principles of universality, of national responsibility, and of equitable geographical representation, so that UN Women was from the start a strong, independent, sufficiently well funded and geographically representative body, endowed with ample legitimacy all over the world.

29. In that connection, El Salvador had no doubt that the activities of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) would be fully incorporated into the work of UN Women and would not just result in a juxtaposition of the mandates of the two merged entities. Indeed, El Salvador wished that the actions to strengthen the Institute's capacity and its studies would continue to be carried out at INSTRAW's current facilities in the Dominican Republic, which were a convenient location, with low operating costs, and where much experience had already been acquired.

30. El Salvador was grateful for the visit conducted in March 2010 by the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences, during which Ms. Manjoo had been able to ascertain the efforts made by the country in that area and its need for support from the international community. Within the framework of its 2010-2014 five-year development plan, El Salvador had launched its second National Policy for the Advancement of Women, which envisaged, in particular, forging closer ties with civil society organizations and movements, especially women's associations, and restructuring the programme for combating violence against women so that it covered all forms of sexist violence, including sexual harassment, harassment in the workplace, trafficking in persons, domestic violence and sexual abuse.

31. **Ms. Shiolashvili** (Georgia), endorsing Belgium's statement on behalf of the European Union, welcomed the establishment of UN Women and congratulated Ms. Bachelet on her appointment as head of that entity.

32. The speaker stressed that the Government of Georgia attached great importance to the advancement of women at every level and has set itself ambitious goals in that regard, with the help of an Advisory Council on Gender Equality, comprising members of parliament and of the Executive, the Officer of the Ombudsman, and nongovernmental groups.

33. A gender equality law, adopted in 2010, established national mechanisms for the advancement of women, required government plans and budgets to take gender considerations into account, and sought to strengthen the security and political participation of women. Another law, on the eradication of domestic violence and protection for victims of it, had been extensively amended in 2009 to supplement mechanisms for preventing such violence and combating its various manifestations. That law had, for instance, made it possible to establish two new public shelters for victims and to implement a whole range of measures for lending them support, including collaboration with local nongovernmental organizations.

34. Among the measures aimed at helping vulnerable women, it was important to single out the assistance provided for persons displaced by the ethnic cleansing that followed the invasion in 2008 of Georgian territory, which still remained under foreign occupation. A series of General Assembly resolutions had addressed the fate of those victims and the Georgian Government was making every effort to ensure that the displaced had decent living conditions and financial support.

35. As a responsible member of the international community, Georgia honoured its obligations as a signatory to the principal instruments combating violence against women. Endowed with better tools for addressing gender issues, Georgia was continually striving to enhance the status of Georgian women.

36. **Mr. Borg** (Malta) explained that Belgium's statement on behalf of the European Union generally speaking reflected his country's views on the advancement of women; however, he wished to clarify his country's position on reproductive health and sexuality rights While reaffirming its support of the Programme of Action of the International Conference

on Population and Development (A/CONF.171/13), adopted in 1994, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (A/CONF.177/20/Rev.1) and subsequent international instruments, including the Millennium Development Goals. Malta could not subscribe to the idea that those commitments could not be met without guaranteeing the health and rights of women with respect to reproductive health and sexuality and the services related to them.

37. Malta intended in particular to disregard any recommendation that would lead to the practice of abortion in the country. National laws prohibited the voluntary interruption of pregnancy and did not recognize it as a family planning measure. Any examination of rights and services relating to the empowerment of women and reproductive health had to take into consideration the fundamental right to life. Malta continued to maintain that any position or recommendation relating to the advancement of women and gender equality would be considered in the light of the reservations entered when the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Actions, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women were adopted.

38. Nevertheless, the advancement of women and gender equality were a cross-cutting priority for Malta, whether in the drafting and enforcement of laws, in observance of equal opportunity, in women's access to the labour market and to social spheres, in issues relating to violence and housing policy, or in the fight against poverty and exclusion and their transmission from one generation to another. For Malta, it was essential to achieve the third Millennium Development Goal: the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Therefore, it welcomed the establishment of UN Women and the appointment of Ms. Bachelet to head it.

39. **Ms. Woldeziorgis** (Ethipia) was glad that, since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, major progress had been made in national, regional and international policies and that there had also been favourable developments regarding girls' and women's access to education.

40. However, serious problems remained and required commitment by all of us: there were still laws discriminating against women; their level of representation in decision making was still below the 30% target; most women still lived in poverty; and maternal mortality was still a major issue in numerous developing countries. Furthermore, negative attitudes and prejudices had hampered progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women. Non-traditional forms of violence, such as trafficking in women and girls, abduction, and rape had become global phenomena. Those problems therefore required greater political commitment at every level in order to increase resources and strengthen policies relating to gender equality and the empowerment of women. Thus, Ethiopia welcomed the establishment of UN Women and trusted that its Executive Board would be geographically representative.

41. Recognizing the need to take concrete steps to enhance women's lives, Ethiopia had adopted a number of measures, particularly to increase the number of women taking part in decision-making processes; to raise the school enrolment rate for girls and women's access to education; and to guarantee women's rights to property. Food security programmes had notably benefited households headed by women and amendments to the Family Code and the Criminal Code had led to harsher punishments for the perpetrators of acts of violence against women, be they abduction, rape, trafficking or genital mutilation.

42. **Ms. Mballa Eyenga** (Cameroon) reaffirmed her country's commitment to the advancement of women and described the three pillars of government policy: improvement of women's living conditions; enhancement of their social and legal status; and the strengthening of institutions.

43. Women were increasingly occupying strategic positions in the administration and in the political arena. In the economic sphere, liberalization of the banking sector had opened up new jobs for women, and institutional support for women heads of small enterprises, assistance for new women entrepreneurs, and the promotion of partnerships with business women in other countries partly explained why numerous Cameroonian women were active in business.

44. As regards women living in rural areas, Cameroon had set about identifying and remedying the factors explaining the persistence of prejudices against women. As regards women's access to non-agricultural employment, steps had been taken to facilitate the recruitment of women and girls for road projects and in

local public services, and for the establishment of microenterprises. In health care, the country provided for all women's basic needs and in certain villages had established health centres equipped to provide reproductive health care services and sensitization to HIV/AIDS, cost-free antiretroviral drugs and hygiene and health training courses. It was determined to combat female genital mutilation and early marriages.

45. As for violence against women, Cameroon had embarked on grassroots sensitization and advocacy. Matters requiring protection for victims or punishment of perpetrators were handled at the inter-ministerial level, with media involvement.

46. Cameroon considered that the advancement of women was part of human development. The desire of the Cameroonian authorities to construct a harmonious society aiming to satisfy everybody's needs, for both men and women, shaped public policies and, with respect to the advancement of women, enjoyed the support of the international community. The key to solving problems was still poverty reduction at every level. Cameroon was pleased with the establishment of UN Women, as it was convinced that it would contribute more vigorously to Member States' efforts on behalf of women.

47. **Mr. Acharya** (Nepal) said that his Government regarded gender equality and gender mainstreaming as top priorities. As a result, women currently held one third of the seats in the Constituent Assembly; were involved in decision-making thanks to an amendment of the Nepalese civil service law; had swollen the ranks of the army and police, and participated in the preparation and execution of local development programs. The Government had also established a National Women's Commission and introduced various programmes to ensure their empowerment in the social and economic spheres. It had also taken steps to guarantee women's rights to property and nationality.

48. In connection with implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Government had, with the help of a Commission to review legislation, repealed or amended a number of laws that discriminated against women and was continuing its efforts in that area.

49. To combat the serious trafficking problem, in 2007 Nepal had passed a law on the subject, formed special task forces operating at the national, regional and municipal levels, and opened centres for the protection of women and child victims of trafficking.

50. Coordinated health care measures had resulted in a greatly reduced maternal mortality rate since 1996 and a greater focus on the question of women's rights with respect to procreation. The speaker stressed that the international community should give priority to the development of rural areas, a pre-condition for enhancing the status and empowerment of the women living in them, and provide increased financial and technical assistance to developing countries, especially those emerging from a conflict.

51. **Mr. Ould Hadrami** (Mauritania) pointed out that his country's social status law guaranteed more equitable rights for women, while Mauritania's Constitution provided for their participation in political and public life. Measures adopted by the President of the Republic had significantly increased such participation, with some women now serving as ministers or occupying high-ranking positions in the administration.

52. In recent years, major progress had been made on the demographic front, with life expectancy increasing from 54 to 60 years and marked declines in death and fertility rates. Women's health status remained, however, worrisome. Mauritania's maternal mortality rate was particularly high.

53. In education, the school enrolment rate for girls had greatly improved, especially in rural areas, thanks to the law on compulsory education for children aged 6 to 14. The percentage of girls in secondary education exceeded 50 percent and there were apparently more women than men at university.

54. Given its priority of promoting the participation of women in the economy, the Government had established a number of poverty reduction mechanisms, particularly in rural areas and in households headed by a woman, but there were still numerous hurdles to be overcome.

55. **Mr. Pálsson** (Iceland) pointed out that his country had always been at the forefront of the advancement of women and was pleased at the progress made in that area by international bodies. The establishment of UN Women was a turning point and it would henceforth be incumbent on that entity to direct efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals with regard to women., in a bid to lower maternal

mortality rates, expand education for girls, remedy the discrepancy between men's and women's wages, develop employment opportunities for women and increase their involvement with the political process. The Icelandic delegation was satisfied with the attention paid to the advancement of women in United Nations debates and considered that it was necessary to make the most of that momentum and honour commitments made, particularly vis-à-vis the poorest countries.

56. With regard to implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), Iceland had particularly stressed women's participation in peace negotiations, as evidenced in its establishment of a training programme directed above all at Afghan and Palestinian students and geared to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women in developing countries and countries affected by conflicts. At the same time, the Government of Iceland intended to update its national Action Plan by adopting a new series of indicators that would permit more effective monitoring of implementation of the resolution.

57. The speaker underscored the fact that, in 2010, Iceland had ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Additional Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

58. **Ms. Borges** (Timor-Leste) said that, in connection with implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), her country had partnered with Ireland and Liberia to put in place a reciprocal learning initiative on women, peace and security, aimed at achieving better understanding of the situation of women directly affected by conflicts and at exchanging ideas on how best to protect their interests.

59. In addition, Timor-Leste was currently adopting numerous measures to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to align domestic legislation with the Convention. The speaker, who said she was pleased that one of her compatriots had been appointed to the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, pointed out that her country was adopting measures to act on the conclusions of the Committee with regard to her country's initial report to the Committee, submitted in 2009.

60. In order to counter violence and discrimination, Timor-Leste had passed a law against domestic violence in 2009, was taking steps to facilitate the denunciation of acts of sexist violence and was training police units to that end, while at the same time encouraging the recruitment of more women police officers.

61. Coordinators of gender mainstreaming had been instructed to encourage proactive participation by women in social and political life. Given the key role that women played for the economic stability of countries and for peace building and security, and in view of the enormous difficulties they faced as a result of the current crises, Timor-Leste welcomed the Security Council's debate on the participation of women in peace building and regarded it as both timely and necessary.

62. The delegation of Timor-Leste offered its full support to UN Women and was pleased at the prospect of seeing this entity cooperating with the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

63. **Mr. Makanga** (Gabon) said that the establishment of UN Women testified to the increased importance that the international community attached to the promotion and protection of women's rights. The Gabonese delegation was pleased to note that the composition of the entity's Executive Board abided by the principle of equitable geographical representation.

64. The policies enacted by the Gabonese Government were designed, on the one hand, to guarantee women access to health care, education and employment and, on the other, to expand their involvement in decision making in the political, economic and social spheres.

65. The Government encouraged increasingly stronger representation of women in decision-making bodies and was working, with UNDP and UNFPA support, in particular, to promote and protect their rights. Despite those efforts and the progress made, it had to be recognized that gender equality was a long way off. It was therefore vital to strive to honour the commitments made to support the advancement of women, to step up efforts to combat violence against women and to improve reproductive health care, so as to reduce the maternal mortality rate.

66. **Mr. Kohona** (Sri Lanka) stated that the status of women left much to be desired, given that they were still, for instance, subjected to multiple forms of discrimination in the agricultural sector and were still victims of domestic violence, sexual exploitation and

trafficking. Nevertheless, numerous countries had established legal frameworks to promote and protect women's rights and had striven to facilitate women's access to education, health care, social security and employment.

67. Having worked for decades to promote women's active participation in political life, Sri Lanka could point to very positive gains in gender equality and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals regarding women and children. By taking the latter into account in its national development program, the country had achieved satisfactory results in respect of the enrolment of girls in primary education and in higher education; the literacy rate for persons between 15 and 24 years of age; access to health care; and the percentage of births assisted by health professionals. It was also worth pointing out that women accounted for 69% of teachers.

68. Although it had gone through a difficult period, the Sri Lank government had continued its efforts to respond to women's needs and promote their empowerment, as testified in particular by the elimination of provisions that discriminated against women in the law on nationality and the ruling on land-use planning, adoption of the Women's Charter, and the planned establishment of a National Women's Commission.

69. Sri Lanka had taken proactive steps to combat violence against women, including awareness campaigns designed to prevent early marriages. It had also put in place programmes to protect migrant workers and members of their families against exploitation, violence, and discriminatory practices, by passing laws facilitating legal protection of minors and implementing social assistance programmes. It had also put in place a 10-year programme for developing rural areas by improving infrastructure and facilitating women's access to new technology. It had also begun to address the female unemployment issue, especially through independent, self-employment programmes.

70. **Mr. Šćepanović** (Montenegro) said that his country fully supported the statement by the Belgian representative on behalf of the European Union and that it welcomed the establishment of UN Women and the appointment of Ms. Bachelet to head it. Since 2003, the Government of Montenegro had adopted numerous measures to enhance gender equality, including a gender equality law in 2007and a 2008-2012 Action Plan to achieve gender equality. It was also planning to pass a domestic violence law in the near future. Furthermore, it had also established a gender equality department in the Ministry for Human Rights and Minorities, as well as a parliamentary committee on the subject. In addition, Montenegro was actively encouraging women's participation in political life. In 2010, it had submitted its first report as an independent State on implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and a mid-term report on implementation of the Millennium Development Goalds, submitted prior to the Summit.

71. **Mr. Gutiérrez** (Peru) welcomed the establishment of UN Women and said that his country hoped to join its Executive Board in order to work for gender equality and the advancement of women.

72. Peru possessed a constitutional and legal framework designed to guarantee the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, including a law on equal opportunities for men and women and an equal opportunities plan. The violence to which women were exposed hindered their advancement, so Peru, which already had a programme for combating domestic and sexual violence, was currently implementing a (2009-2015) National Plan to address that grave problem. It had also launched an information campaign against the wood-burning stoves used in 30% of households in the Andes, as the smoke from them posed a threat to women's health and to that of other family members. The goal was to have five times fewer stoves of that kind by 2021.

73. In education, the goal of primary education for all had practically been achieved, while in secondary and higher education there were more female students than male. Women were also increasingly entering the labour market and participating in political life.

74. Finally, the speaker announced that, as in previous years, Peru would co-sponsor the resolution on the elimination of all forms of violence against women and the resolution to address the obstetric fistula problem.

75. **Mr. Cabactulan** (Philippines) declared that the advancement of women was a priority for his country, which had long had appropriate institutional and legal mechanisms to that end. The *Magna Carta*, a charter of women's human rights adopted in 2009, provided the legal framework needed to protect women against

exploitation, dangerous working conditions, and human trafficking. For its part, the 1995-2015 Development Plan for gender equality recognized the role of women in peacekeeping and peace initiatives. Bearing in mind the large number of women among members of the Philippine Diaspora, protecting women was a cornerstone of that country's policy toward migrant workers.

76. Finally, the speaker underscored the importance of comprehensive implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, welcomed the establishment of UN Women, and expressed satisfaction with the adoption of the United National Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which encouraged an approach sensitive to the human rights, gender and age of victims and attempted to address the factors that expose individuals, especially women and children, to trafficking in persons.

77. **Mr. Pak** Tok Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) declared that the advancement of women was a key socio-political issue. Since his country's liberation in 1946, its Government had promulgated a gender equality law and nowadays women fully exercised their rights at every level of the State and of society. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea was committed to honouring its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and to actively contributing to all international initiatives for the promotion and protection of women's rights.

78. Korea would like, however, once again to bring up the subject of Japan's attitude regarding the matter of so-called "comfort women," which was considered one of the classic examples of violation of women's rights in modern history, of which hundreds of thousands of Asian women had been victims, including Korean women. Korea adamantly demanded once again that Japan recognize its responsibility for the sexual enslavement of 200,000 women, the forced enlistment of 8.4 million Koreans and the massacre of a million more, to offer a since apology and to make reparation to the victims.

Rights of reply

79. **Mr. Takasu** (Japan), in exercising his right to reply, declared that the accusations made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were groundless. He gave assurances that Japan assumed responsibility for its past and had been promoting international peace and prosperity for over 60 years. It bore witness to its full respect for democracy and human rights. He reminded those present that in 1993 Japan had sincerely apologized and expressed its regrets regarding the "comfort women" and that his Prime Minister had written a letter of apology to them.

80. Regarding reparation for the harm done, he recalled that, in accordance with the Pyongyang Declaration, all claims for damages prior to August 15, 1945 would be relinquished once relations between the two countries had returned to normal. Japan was endeavouring to normalize its relations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and it requested that country to do likewise, particularly by demonstrating its goodwill regarding the issues of abducted persons and nuclear weapons.

81. **Mr. Pak** Tok Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said he was dissatisfied and disappointed with Japan's reply, which sought to deceive the international community by claiming that it was doing its best to settle matters when in fact it had not made amends for its past crimes. The "comfort women" issue had been debated for over 20 years in various United Nations bodies because it was a very serious crime against humanity, but Japan's response had not changed. As for the Pyongyang Declaration, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had done everything in its power to honour its commitments, including with regard to the disappeared persons, whereas Japan refused to assume its responsibilities. It should be ashamed to lie to the international community in that way.

82. **Mr. Takasu** (Japan) said he had already explained Japan's position in the past and had no wish to repeat it. He reserved, however, the right to refute the remarks of the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, should the occasion arise.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.